

Ex-Army Agent Details Spying on Stevenson, Mikva

By Michael Getler
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Former Army intelligence agent John M. O'Brien told Sen. Sam J. Ervin's Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights yesterday that despite Army denials, military agents had both spied upon and collected information about Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson III during 1969 and 1970 when the Illinois Democrat was state treasurer.

O'Brien whose letter to Ervin in December concerning alleged Army spying on some 800 civilians and activist organizations, laid the groundwork for the current hearings, charged that Stevenson's file was begun late in September, 1969, and that it contained at various times between 5 and 20 items, including FBI and military intelligence reports as well as news clippings.

After the hearings, O'Brien said in an interview that Stevenson was spied upon "for about seven months as part of a low-level, undercover operation."

Asked if Army Secretary Stanley Resor knew about the undercover work, O'Brien said, "Resor is a civilian, he probably didn't know."

The 26-year-old ex-staff sergeant, who also claims the Army has interfered with his getting a job as a civilian, did not waver from his contentions when cross-examined by Sen. Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb.).

O'Brien said he saw the team chief at the 113th Military Intelligence Group in Evanston, Ill., Richard Norusis, a GS-11 Army civilian employee, start the file on Stevenson.

O'Brien says he was surprised and asked "what authority he had to open a file on an elected public official." O'Brien said Norusis told him, "I know what I'm doing."

The ex-sergeant said he had occasion to go to the file several times, but the only specific item he recalled reading was part of the report which landed Stevenson in the Army files to begin with. That described a picnic at the Stevenson residence attended by civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was apparently going to endorse Stevenson's candidacy for the Senate.

O'Brien said on several occasions he approached his immediate military superiors to complain about the files on Stevenson and on the American Civil Liberties Union. "I don't think they really understood what I was telling them," he said. "They said, 'Don't worry, we'll look into it.'" They made no distinction, O'Brien testified, between violent and non-violent dissenters.

Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) asked why O'Brien didn't take his case further up the line: "Were you waiting till



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Sen. John Tunney, chatting with Sen. Edward Kennedy, is so new in Senate he's still using House nameplate.

you got out of the Army to get publicity or were you trying to correct the situation?"

O'Brien admitted he was afraid of the repercussions and a court-martial. Besides, he added, "the Army would have evaded the question and I never considered the Army the best place to correct it. I wrote to Sen. Ervin, not to the newspapers, refused to sell my story and have gone to great personal expense."

The former agent was praised for his courage and patriotism at the hearings by Ervin and by Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and John V. Tunney (D-Calif.).

O'Brien said the ACLU was described as a Socialist-Communist organization in the Army files. O'Brien said, "It is

about as Communistic as a butter-and-jelly sandwich."

O'Brien, who left the Army in June, 1970, after five years of service, said the civilian intelligence chiefs in his office held a tight check on the files. No files could actually be started without their approval, though agents did have the authority to transfer files to other agencies.

He said the office chiefs drew their guidance from the intelligence Collection Plan sent out by the Army Intelligence Command at Ft. Holabird, Md., but no one else saw the plan, and the agents in the field had considerable freedom to collect information on anyone.

O'Brien also indicated that politics may have played a part in watching both Steven-

son and Illinois Rep. Abner J. Mikva, both liberal Democrats. "They drew the line when Sen. (Charles) Percy (R-Ill.) and Vice President Agnew came to town," he said.

Mikva followed into the hearing room and demanded a complete congressional ban on all domestic surveillance by the military and the resignation of all the military commanders who setup and operated the spy network. He did not name them.

Mikva expressed a belief that much of the unauthorized spying was unknown to the top civilian leaders in the Defense Department. He said that despite several requests he still hasn't had a straight answer from either Defense Secretary Melvin Laird or Army Secretary Resor about

whether a file was kept on him and what was in it.

Mikva also showed reporters a letter he had received from O'Brien last month in which O'Brien said his former superiors had been advised to report unfavorably on him in his application for a job at the University of Illinois.

The Army has denied that O'Brien is the target of any retaliation.

O'Brien also said the Army had started files on newsmen who had written stories favorable to antiwar groups.